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Women's Attitudes towards Wife Beating and its Connection with Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): An Empirical Analysis of a National Demographic and Health Survey Conducted in Pakistan

By Muhammad Saud*¹, Asia Ashfaq², Siti Mas'udah*³

Abstract

Wife beating, a form of intimate partner violence that is used as a tool to correct wives' behavior, is not acceptable in most parts of the world. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a global health problem and is far more than a dilemma; it is a systemic form of abuse that is the third major cause of death around the world. Despite it being unacceptable in most parts of the world, in its different forms, wife beating is still a commonly practiced pattern of behavior that pervades all societies, patriarchal ones in particular. This is a problem in the patriarchal Pakistani society. The present study aims to investigate the acceptance and justification of violence (wife beating) among women. The present research uses secondary data from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) conducted by the National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) in 2012-13. The results show that attitudes towards wife beating, either justified or unjustified, vary with differing socio-demographic factors, such as age, region, area of residence, education, and wealth index. Education and wealth index variables show a highly significant relationship in determining justification of wife beating. More than half of the respondents did not justify wife beating in any given circumstance. The study divulges a significant relationship between socio-demographic factors and the justification of wife beating in different circumstances. These justifiable circumstances include: beating if a wife goes to the market or any other place without her husband's permission; if she ignores her children; if she confronts or tries to reason with him; if she declines to have sex; and if she burns food. Attitudes regarding whether certain circumstances are justifiable or not varies with socio-demographic factors such as age, region, area of residence, education, and wealth index. More than half of the respondents do not justify wife beating under any given circumstances. The most widely accepted reason for wife beating in Pakistan is arguing with one's husband, while the most unacceptable reason for wife beating is burning food.

Keywords: Women, IPV, PDH survey, Wife violence, Justifiable beating.

Introduction

Gender-based violence brings significant, burdensome outcomes, in terms of violating basic human rights, in the fields of health culture and socio-economic life. Wife beating as intimate partner violence is accepted in many parts of the world as a tool to correct the behavior of wives.

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Acceptance of wife beating in some countries shows the lower status of women and the inequality they face. The level of acceptance of wife beating also shows the behavioral, social, and cultural transformation of society (Rani, Bonu, Sidibe, 2004). Violence results from the complicated interplay between people, connections, social, cultural, and economic variables (WHO, 2002).

Gender-based violence brings high costs and consequences in all countries and societies (Levy, 2008). The majority of studies discussing the correlation between domestic violence and nutrition and health state that domestic violence has an impact on levels of nutrition and health (Yount, et al., 2011). Studies conducted on women around the world reveal that the level of tendency to suicide was higher for women, especially those who experience domestic violence (Yang, et al., 2006; Tadege, 2008; Hassanian-Moghaddam, Zamani, & Sarjami, 2016; Kuhlman, Wolford- Clevenger, Faulk, D'Amato, & Granato, 2016). Service centers have been established for women, providing them with socialization and training to overcome domestic violence and suicide risks (Kavak, et al., 2018). Studies in Turkey show that 32.4-61.4% of women suffer from domestic violence (Doğanavşargil & Vahip, 2007; Güler, Tel, & Tuncay, 2005; Kocacık & Doğan, 2006; Mayda & Akkuş, 2003; Naçar, Baykan, & Poyrazoglu, 2009; Özyurt & Deveci, 2010; Şahin, Yetim, & Öyekçin, 2012; Yanikkerem & Saruhan, 2005). In India, women of high socio-economic status who experience domestic violence may find it easier to cut ties with their partners because they have the wealth and a place to separate from their partners (Heise and Kotsdam, 2015). Women who experience domestic violence rarely participate in public policy because violence also affects women's social values in society (Bangura & Thomas, 2015; Campbell & Mannell, 2016). Relationships that are based on a system of patriarchy, conflict, and poverty allow men to subordinate women who are vulnerable to domestic violence (True, 2012)

In particular, the South Asian region lies under a patriarchal structure within society, both in the public and private domains of life. In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, women have low social, economic, and political status compared to men because of this patriarchal structure. Women make up 53% of the total population, and most of them live in poverty (Saeed, 2013). A low-income status fosters violence in determined gender power roles, where violence controls women in a patriarchal structure, especially in low-income families. Women live under a continuous cloud of restriction and fear, where the most abusive forms of violence occur in their homes. In following and maintaining the expectations of traditions and norms, they have to obey their families and the men who guarantee their lives (Tarar & Pulla, 2014). A male-dominated culture expects women to obey men (Khan, 2011).

Violence is a recognized tool to control women as their sexuality is a mark that sustains the honor of the family (Tara & Pullaa, 2014). Men in both private and public domains control women and consider them inferior. IPV was identified to be justified by 41-90% of the female respondents in at least one situation (Hindin, 2003). Among household deaths, 49% are caused by partner violence or wife beating. The social status of women and the social context determine the causes of wife beating (Jewkes et al., 2002). Young age, little income, no education, and dependency on a partner are all risk factors of intimate partner violence. Among the accepted reasons for IPV, refusal to have sex and neglect of children are the most common in society (Hindin, 2003). One in three women worldwide experience IPV during their lifetimes. It is the most common form of violence and brings hazardous outcomes, not only to public health, but also at the cost of family and child disturbance. According to World Health Organization (WHO) study of violence against women in intimate relationships, the prevalence of physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes range from 15-71%, and the prevalence in the past year also shows wide variation

(4-54%), with the lowest rates found in Japan and the highest in Ethiopia, Peru, and Bangladesh (Krantz, 2011; Morgan, 2011).

The Center of Health and Gender Equity (1999) reveals that, around the world, at least one woman in every three is beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused during her lifetime. History shows that women are often victims of violence and that the abuse always occurs within their homes (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In Asia, violence is the ultimate option for men to control their females and maintain their cultural power, making females oppressed (Rae & Aanderson, 2003). Pakistani women and girls live under a vast shadow of violence by men, in form of beatings, acid throwing, and even killing in the name of honor if the females deviate from the social and cultural norms and violate the expectations of their traditional roles (Gerlach, 2010).

Sub-Saharan countries accept this force of power of men against women, and both men and women seem to accept this. Fulfilling and performing gender roles in an inappropriate way is often the cause of wife beating. Women's acceptance shows that wife beating is a right of a man to control their choices and decisions by their force of power and violence (Rashid et al., 2014). Attitudes towards violence against women and wife beating is highly dependent on women's position and rights in society (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Sociological theories indicate that low educational and economic status and a lack of support from authority, as well as a close social network system, increases the risk of IPV. Gender theories relate this with powerful gender roles and subordination of women. Pakistan is among the low incomes countries where men have power force it upon women through violence and it is culturally acceptable and normal in marriage. It is considered to be a private matter where this misbehavior is usually justified by the wife, although religion does not support this (Ali, 2006; Krantz, 2011).

Women accept that they are responsible for the abuse or beating by their husbands. These women are believers of a normative structure amongst those societies where women have to accept the subordination of men. In South Central Asia, 56% of men and 57% of women accept that wife beating is normal behavior. In Sub-Saharan countries, 74% of women and 62% of men consider it a family secret and a personal matter (Tran et al., 2016).

In male-dominated societies, acceptance of violence is associated with gender dynamics; 41-90% of women justify this in at least one situation. Violence is seen as a private matter instead of a community issue in many developing countries (Hindin, 2003). In South Africa and India, violence is a normal part of marital relationships. High education and employment status and liberal thinking are high risks when it comes to beating. In Zimbabwe, the gender norm is to accept violence in marital matters in order to settle disputes and is said to be tolerated (Hindin, 2003).

Khawaja & Barazi (2005) find that men and women respond differently when it comes to their acceptance of wife beating under different circumstances. In certain social contexts, high education and income level of females threaten the masculinity and power of males, which leads to violence against women. By contrast, low income and the dependency of females on males, forces women to perform the familial obligations expected in their traditional roles and norms, which also leads them to tolerate abuse (Vyas et al., 2015). A study conducted in 2015 shows that 49.4% of men admit that they use physical violence. Pakistan is a country where most people live in joint family systems, and where the wife faces harassment from the whole family (Ali & Gavino, 2007). Due to the patriarchal structure of its society, this research focuses on women's attitudes towards wife beating. Analysis from the DHS uncovers the causes and responses of women in all provinces with regard to wife beating. The present study has a number of specific objectives: to investigate the acceptance and justification of violence upon women, and find the socio-demographic factors behind the justification of wife beating.

Study Methods

The present study is a quantitative analysis of the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) collected by the National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) between 2012-13. It is a cross-sectional-representative survey and data was collected through a questionnaire from 13,558 married women between the ages of 15-49 years. The sample size of 13,558 was approached to ensure reasonable precision for the study indicators through a systematic random sampling technique in order to guarantee representativeness. The survey covers the complete history of domestic violence. Considering the objectives of the study, the variables were extracted from the data available in the survey report section of domestic violence, specifically dealing with wife beating, and analyzed with the application of various statistical tests. Socio-demographic factors of the respondents were taken as the independent variables, defined with the sub-constructs of age, region, area of residence, education level, and wealth index. The association of independent variables was then analyzed with the dependent variable, measuring the attitude of married women towards justifiable wife beating. Justification of beating is characterized by five actions of a wife: i) going out without telling one's husband; ii) neglecting the children; iii) arguing with one's husband; iv) refusing to have sex; and v) burning food while cooking. All the constructs of justification are measured by a dichotomous response category as 'yes' or 'no'. After this, the five given variables are then computed and converted into one variable as a justification of wife beating with response categories and recoded as 0=not justified and 1=justified. During recoding, 'not justified' includes those who had not justified wife beating at all under any circumstances, whereas the category of justified includes responses with at least one of the given circumstances. The association between dependent and independent variables is analyzed using univariate and bivariate analyses.

Results and Analysis

This section of the article reveals the results regarding frequency and cross tabulation analysis conducted in SPSS.

Table 1. Respondents for Their Attitude towards Justification of Wife Beating; Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, 2012-2013.

Characteristics		Female (n=13,558)	
		N	(Percentage)
Age of the respondents			
1	15-19	567	4.2
2	20-24	2,048	15.1
3	25-29	2,723	20.1
4	30-34	2,438	18.0
5	35-39	2,300	17.0
6	40-44	1,808	13.3
7	45-49	1,674	12.3
Region of Pakistan			
1	Punjab	3,800	28.0
2	Sindh	2,941	21.7
3	KPK	2,695	19.9
4	Baluchistan	1,953	14.4
5	Gilgit Baltistan	1,216	9.0
6	Islamabad (ICT)	953	7.0
Type of Residence			
1	Urban	6,351	46.8
2	Rural	7,207	53.2
Educational Level			
1	Illiteracy	7,625	56.2
2	Primary	1,831	13.5
3	Secondary	2,415	17.8
4	Higher	1,687	12.4
Wealth Index			
1	Poor	5,072	37.4
2	Middle	2,589	19.1
3	Rich	5,897	43.5

The above table shows the results regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. For the total sample (n=13558), a frequency table was generated where percentages were calculated. The above-mentioned items are the important variables of this study as the attitude of participants was differentiated and analyzed on the basis of socio-demographic factors. The data reveals that the respondents' ages range from 15-49 years. The sample domain includes all the provinces and the capital of Pakistan where more than one quarter of the respondents (28.0%) belong to the Punjab province. Slightly more than half (53.2%) of the respondents reside in rural areas while more than half (56.2%) of females have no formal education. Most of the respondents (43.5%) are indexed as rich.

Table 2. Attitude of Respondents towards Justification of Wife Beating; Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, 2012-2013

S. No	Variables	Yes
1	Wife goes out without telling husband	4,511 (33.8%)
2	Wife neglects children	4,602 (34.5%)
3	Wife argues with husband	5,063 (37.0%)
4	Wife refuses to have sex with husband	4,547 (34.7%)
5	Wife burns food	2,506 (18.8%)

The table above shows the outcomes of women's behavior towards wife beating. The five conditions are: if she goes out without mentioning it to him; if she neglects the children; if she fights or argues with him; if she chooses not to have sex with him; and if she burns food. Respondents were permitted to select various explanations. The most commonly acknowledged cause was fighting with the husband, while the most unacceptable cause was if the woman burns food, as recorded by the participants.

Table 3. Attitude of Respondents towards Justification of Wife Beating; Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, 2012-2013

S. No	Variable	Not Justified	Justified
1	Attitude towards wife beating	6,883 (53.3 %)	6,024 (46.7 %)

The findings of the demographic survey show that a little more than half of the respondents (53.3%) report that wife beating is not justified under any circumstances. The most common reason for wife beating in Pakistan is arguments with the husband, neglecting their children, refusing sexual intercourse, and leaving the home without permission from the husband or family. As in the case of urban/rural and provincial differentials, it is found that 76% of rural women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa strongly agree with wife beating justification. While in urban society, the views of women are 25% in Punjab, and 22% in Sindh.

Table 4. Cross Tabulation of Socio-demographic Factors vs Knowing Respondents' Attitude towards Justification of Wife Beating

No	Category	Justification of Wife Beating		Pearson Chi-Square Test		
		Not Justified	Justified	χ^2	df	p
Age of the respondents	15-19	229	301	34.14 1	6	0.000
		1.8 %	2.3 %			
	20-24	980	952			
		7.6 %	7.4 %			
	25-29	1,406	1,177			
		10.9 %	9.1 %			
	30-34	1,285	1,028			
		10.0 %	8.0 %			

	35-39	1,182 9.2 %	1,009 7.8 %			
	40-44	945 7.3 %	794 6.2 %			
	45-49	856 6.6 %	763 5.9 %			
Region of Pakistan	Punjab	2,438 18.9 %	1,260 9.8 %	1.306	5	0.000
	Sindh	1,688 13.1 %	1,060 8.2 %			
	KPK	792 6.1 %	1,807 14.0 %			
	Baluchistan	885 6.9 %	856 6.6 %			
	Gilgit Baltistan	366 2.8 %	824 6.4 %			
	Islamabad (ICT)	714 5.5 %	217 1.7 %			
	Urban	3,858 29.9 %	2,218 17.2 %	5.697	1	0.000
	Rural	3,025 23.4 %	3,806 29.5 %			
	Illiteracy	2,940 22.8%	4,222 32.7%	1.218	3	0.000
Education al Level	Primary	980 7.6%	779 6.0%			
	Secondary	1,608 12.5%	734 5.7%			
	Higher	1,355 10.5%	289 2.2%			
	Poor	1,712 13.3%	3,064 23.7%	1.245	2	0.000
Wealth Index	Middle	1,201 9.3%	1,264 9.8%			
	Rich	3,970 30.8%	1,696 13.1%			

A cross tabulation was executed to see the relationship of the justification of wife beating against socio-demographic factors. Age shows a highly significant relationship ($p < 0.000$) with an attitude towards justification of wife beating, decreasing as the age groups increase; among 4.1% of the lowest age group '15-19' 2.3% justify wife beating under given circumstances, whereas 6.6% of the age group '45-49' do not justify wife beating.

Region shows a highly significant relationship ($p < 0.000$) with an attitude towards justification of wife beating. The countryside population was compared in percentage against different regions. Within the total population of Punjab (28%), only 9.8% justify wife beating, whereas the total population (19.9%) and (9.0%) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Gilgit

Baltistan, 14.0% and 6.4%, respectively, justify wife beating under given circumstances. Place of residence shows a highly significant relationship ($p<0.000$) with an attitude towards the justification of wife beating. As the type of residence changes from rural to urban areas, justification decreases. When viewing the type of residence, a higher portion (29.5%) justify wife beating in rural areas, whereas 17.2% justify such behavior in urban areas. Education shows a highly significant relationship ($p<0.000$), with an attitude towards the justification of wife beating decreasing as the educational level increases. No education has the highest percentage (32.7%) in which wife beating is justified, whereas 2.2% with a higher educational level justify wife beating. The wealth index shows a highly significant relationship ($p<0.000$) with an attitude towards justification of wife beating, which decreases as wealth increases. The 'rich' group has the highest percentage (30.8%) of non-justification of wife beating, whereas the 'poor' group has the highest percentage (23.7%) that wife beating is justified under given circumstances.

Discussion

Descriptive and inferential analysis of the data carries varied results from the findings of the present study. Associations are drawn among different factors to address the questions framed in the present research. In education, 56.2% ($n=7625$) of the respondents have no education, whereas the next highest level of education is secondary education at 17.8% ($n=2415$). The higher education category accounts for only 12.4% ($n=1687$) of all the respondents. This variable provides remarkable findings in the present study, as when it comes to no education, a great portion of all the respondents justify wife beating under different circumstances. This includes beating if the wife goes outside without any information, if she is not caring for her children, if she argues with him, if she is not interested in sexual intercourse, and if the wife burns food, while the situation is the opposite in the case of higher education.

These findings are quite similar to a study conducted in Zimbabwe, where more than fifty percent of the women asked about wife beating justified it when the wife argued with her husband (36%), neglected her children (33%), and went shopping or to any other place without the husband's permission (30%) (Hindin, 2003). On the other hand, Ilika (2005) show that in Uganda, 90% of women justified wife beating under numerous conditions. Considering a study conducted in Palestine, women generally perceived wife beating to be justified; 65% of the women agreed with it for at least one reason. Reasons given included if a wife insults her husband (59%), and if she goes to market or any other place without her husband's permission 25% (Dhaher et al., 2010).

The age variable provides significant findings as, with an increase in age, the justification of wife beating decreases. The results above indicate that among 4.1% of the lowest age group '15-19', 2.3% justify wife beating under given circumstances, whereas 6.6% of the age group '45-49' do not justify wife beating. Another study also provides a similar stance in this regard, with more than half of women under the age of 15-19 years and 20-24 years likely to believe that wife beating is justified (Hindin, 2003).

In a number of countries with social construction factors, such as rules that justify beatings of wives, dominant patriarchal values, and women's subordination, a high level of domestic violence exists (Hidrobo and Fernald, 2013). Within the region, Punjab has 28.0% ($n=3800$) of all respondents, whereas others suffer from comparably less population than Punjab in the sample domain for the present study. With regard to residence, 53.2% ($n=7207$) of the respondents are from rural areas. This variable shows quite interesting results as the respondents living in urban areas show a decreasing trend towards justification of wife beating in the above given

circumstances compared to research participants living in rural areas. Hadi (2009) also finds similar results and indicates that the place of residence has a significant effect on husbands' justification of wife beating. For every one-unit increase in the place of residence (1=urban, 2=rural), the chances of husbands justifying wife beating increase by a factor of 1.65, holding other variables constant. Lastly, the wealth index variable is of paramount importance in determining the relationship of wife beating with socio-demographic factors. Studies in Morocco show that the factors that influence the occurrence of domestic violence are the age of younger women, low socio-economic status, and, in most of the cases, others interfering in a couple's domestic affairs. Knowing the profile of women and understanding the characteristics of victims and the perpetrators of violence are the first steps to better understanding cases and creating action programs aimed at reducing levels of domestic violence (Boughima, et al., 2018). In this present study, respondents with a better economic status show a decreasing tendency towards justification of wife beating under given circumstances.

Conclusion

The present study shows a significant relationship between socio-demographic factors and the justification of wife beating under different circumstances, including if the wife goes to a market or any other place without permission, if she ignores her children, if she confronts or reasons with her husband, if she declines to have sex, and if she burns food. The attitude of being either justified or unjustified varies with differing socio-demographic factors, such as age, region, area of residence, education, and wealth index. More than half of the respondents do not justify wife beating under any circumstances. Therefore, behind the justification of wife beating, the most widely accepted reason in Pakistan is arguing with the husband, while the most unacceptable reason for wife beating is burning food.

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